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ABSTRACT

An educational/continuing education program was implemented for single parents/homemakers and pregnant teenagers. The program provided training in parenting skills, childhood growth and development, responsibilities of parenthood, the rights of children, decision-making skills, and vocational guidance and directions. Increased opportunity was provided for the participant group to avail themselves of ongoing vocational training programs. During the project year, 40 participants enrolled for program services, out of 52 potential participants. All received vocational counseling and were required to enroll in a vocational class at the local high school or a vocational program at the local junior college. Enrollment in nontraditional vocational areas was encouraged. All participants were referred for services at community agencies as needed. Thirty-two participants who were potential dropouts continued their education. The birth weights of infants born to program participants late in the project were higher, on the average, than birth weights of infants born near the beginning of the project. Prenatal care and infant medical care improved. Scarce and hard-to-find infant care improved as day care homes were established. Transportation to these homes was available as needed. By these means the barriers that prevented the targeted population from participating in an educational program were eliminated. (YLB)

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Final Report
DVE 400-15170-7-1-D04
June 1, 1986 to June 1, 1987

Alternative Education Program
For
Single Parents, Homemakers and Pregnant Students

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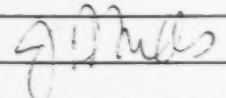
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ABSTRACT

"In 1985 the teenage pregnancy rate in Madison County was documented at 17.5% compared to a Statewide average of 15%. A total of 54 infants were born to mothers between 14 and 18 years of age."

A project coordinator was hired through a sub-contract with a non-profit agency. The major responsibility of the coordinator was to secure the necessary materials, equipment and supplies for implementing a successful educational/continuing education program for single parents/homemakers and pregnant teenagers. The additional necessary staff, a teacher and a teacher's aide/bus driver were employed by the school district to conduct classwork based on the curriculum designed especially for the project. Guest speakers with varying backgrounds and disciplines were an integral part of the program. The administrative staff of local schools were engaged to assist in the development of a curriculum which would meet all state requirements. A close working relationship was formed with the guidance department of each school for the purpose of maintaining continuity in the educational needs of each participant.

The program would allow for additional training in Parenting Skills, Childhood Growth and Development, Responsibilities of Parenthood, The Rights of Children, Decision Making Skills, Vocational Guidance and Directions. It is believed that this support network would provide an increased opportunity for the participant group to better avail themselves of on-going vocational training programs.

During the 1986-87 program year 52 potential program participants were identified and personally contacted for possible program participation. All participants received vocational counseling and were required to enroll in a vocational class at the local high school or a vocational program at the local junior college. Enrollment in non-traditional vocational areas was encouraged.

During the project year forty (40) participants from the targeted population enrolled for program services. **Six (6) participants transferred into G.E.D. and/or Vocational Training programs at the Junior College; *Two (2) participants graduated with vocational certificates; *Two left vocational training after becoming employed; *Two left school before completing vocational training; one of the two remained in high school. **Seven participants graduated from high school; *Nineteen (19) participants will continue their education at the Project Center or at their home school; Eight (8) participants left the program for various reasons: Two (2) transferred into schools outside of the school district; Two (2) left because of childcare problems; One (1) left because of continued medical problems with her child; Three (3) left for lack of interest in completing school.

The Project, in its infancy proved successful for these stated reasons: Thirty two (32) potential drop-outs continued their education. The birth weights of infants born to program participants increased. Pre-natal care and infant medical care improved. Scarce and hard to find infant care improved based on the establishment of day care homes. Transportation was available to homes when needed. The barriers which prevented the targeted population from participating in an educational program were eliminated.

Introduction

During the 1984-85 school term, Madison County High School (grades 9-12, 900 students) had thirty seven (37) female students who became pregnant and gave birth. Approximately twenty-five (25) of the thirty seven (37) remained in school. In November, 1985, an additional eighteen (18) students were pregnant.

"In 1985 the teenage pregnancy rate in Madison County was documented at 17.5% compared to a statewide average of 15%. Madison County is one of four leading counties with a high percentage of births to mothers under 18 years of age. A total of fifty-four (54) infants were born to mothers between the ages of fourteen (14) and eighteen (18) years."

The school system had done little to meet the special educational or services needed for this population.

The basic needs of these students were: to improve decision-making skills, enhance self esteem and to develop marketable skills so that they could enter the labor market and earn a wage that was adequate for their family support.

This project was designed to meet an unmet need. Most single parents/homemakers received aid for families with dependent children and many of the pregnant students and student mothers qualified for free lunches at school. This project would allow for additional training in parenting skills, childhood growth and development, responsibilities of parenthood, the rights of children, decision-making skills and vocational guidance and directions.

It is believed that this support network would provide increased opportunity for this participant group to better avail themselves of on-going vocational training programs.

During the 1986-87 school term forty (40) students enrolled in the program. *Six (6) of the enrollees were directed into vocational programs at North Florida Junior College. Two (2) of the six graduated with vocational certificates. Two (2) are presently employed. Eighteen (18) enrollees were directed into vocational classes on the high school level. Eight (8) middle school participants were ineligible for participation in vocational programs on the high school and college level, but were introduced to occupations in the health care area and employability skills.

The Madison County School Board and North Florida Junior College were assigned training responsibility by the Region VI Vocational Advising Committee. Recruitment of single parents into currently approved programs is therefore, completely consistent with current Florida Occupation Information System Data.

Methods

In June, 1986, through a sub-contract with Brehon Institute for Human Services, a project Coordinator was hired. The immediate responsibility was to secure appropriate instructional materials, supplies and equipment necessary for implementing a successful educational/continuing education program for single parents and pregnant teenagers. Additional requirements included arranging for necessary facility improvements and securing additional furnishings.

The overall program was designed using technical assistance from staff members of Brehon Institute. Program brochures, case file maintenance and forms for collecting data were designed for consistency with existing single parent/teenage pregnancy programs under the auspices of Brehon Institute.

To address the educational needs of participants desiring to continue or complete their education in the public school system, a close relationship was developed with staff of the guidance department at the local high school for the purpose of maintaining continuity in the educational needs of each participant.

To further address the educational needs of participants, the administrative staff of local schools were engaged to assist in the development of a curriculum which would meet all state requirements as well as afford participants the opportunity to learn parenting related and coping skills, in addition to the academic and vocational courses needed for the individual to remain on grade level or graduate. The courses offered for the first semester were: Parenting I, Peer Facilitating I, Health for Expectant Parents, Employability Skills, English, Mathematics and Social Studies. All seniors enrolled in the program were transported to their home school for their noon meal and afternoon classes. Meals were brought in for non-seniors.

The program was modified for the second semester and the following courses were offered: Parenting I & II, Peer Facilitating I & II, Adaptive Physical Education, Exploration of Health Occupations (6-8 grades) English, Mathematics, and Social Studies. All high school participants were transported to their home school for vocational training in Practical Business Skills or Clothing and Textiles; after the noon meal, all non-seniors were transported back to the project center. The noon meal for middle school participants was again brought in to the center. At the end of the 2nd semester 1 student had successfully completed vocational training, 1 student left the training but remained in high school. Five were referred for 1st time enrollment in vocational programs at the local junior college.

In addition to regular class work, approximately thirty (30) guest speakers with varying disciplines and backgrounds were invited to visit the center and discuss topics ranging from adoption to zippers for expanding regular clothing for maternity wear.

The participants were also transported for outings and field trips that included tours of the labor and delivery room at the local hospital, childcare centers, nursing centers for the elderly and the vocational center at the local junior college.

Program participants were surveyed to find out which community services they were utilizing. Based on the individual need, referrals were made to the appropriate social service agencies that included pre and post-natal care at the local medical center, dental treatment, financial support through the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, personal counseling through the local mental health center, family planning and the women, infant, children (wic) programs administered by the local health department and educational programs at the local vocational center. The local school district provided transportation for all participant referrals. Arrangements were made for the women, infant, children (wic) representative to come to the Project Center rather than transport the participants, much time was saved in the application process and less time was missed from class activities.

During the first semester of school, childcare both physically and financially was noted as the reason for nine (9) persons not participating in the program. To eliminate this barrier three (3) day-care homes were established with assistance from Big Bend Child Care Coordinating Council and the Title Twenty Subsidized Child Care Program along with the Department of Health and rehabilitative Services, the Licensing Agent. To date thirteen (13) infants of participants are receiving quality child care daily. Child care transportation was also noted as a barrier during the first semester. To eliminate this barrier transportation was provided for infants and their parents to and from the day care homes. A transportation agreement was reached between the School Board and a local taxi company. The school district then provided transportation for participants from the day care home to the Project Center and back to the day care home.

The program addressed the participants need to continue their class work while confined after delivery by providing homebound instructions for up to six weeks. This additional service prevented the participants from becoming lackadaisical towards their studies and afforded them the opportunity to continue progressing towards graduation or the next grade level.

Program staff was observant of parent/infant bonding responses, infant nurturing or rejection gestures, as well as being watchful for the practical application of the use of skills that had been taught in the classroom.

participants allowed to enroll in the program were single parents or pregnant teenagers between the ages of twelve (12) and twenty-one (21) years old. A basic requirement for all participants in the program was that they participate in a vocational course of program. The program services were available to eligible participants regardless of race, sex, national origin, disadvantage or handicapping condition. Thirty-six (36) Blacks and four (4) non-blacks made up the Center enrollment. Participants would become ineligible for program service upon leaving the vocational course or program.

The staff at the center consisted of a program coordinator, teacher and teacher aide/bus driver.

Community Groups and Services Used:

An advisory committee consisting of individuals from the Children, Youth and Family unit of the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, Madison County Co-Operative Extension Service, Madison County High School, a local Pediatrician and from Tri County Medical Center. This committee met quarterly for the purpose of discussing program objectives, maintaining positive community awareness and securing additional community resources.

In efforts to acquaint participants with services available through the Job Training Partnership Act, staff from the community based JTPA Office as well as the College based Program were invited to the Center where presentations were made relevant to services available through JTPA as well as eligibility criteria for program participation. Participants were referred for utilization of services offered at both program locations. Additionally, participants were introduced to services offered by the Florida State Employment Service through presentations from the local FSES Director.

The Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services was a referral source for such needs as Child Support Enforcement and aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

Services from the Public Health Department included: The Women, Infant, Children (WIC) nutrition program, Family Planning referrals, immunizations and physical examinations for child care.

The Tri-County Medical Center provided medical care for the majority of program participants. Referrals for extremely high risk participants were made by the Medical Center staff.

In efforts to maintain continuity with the participants home schools, a close association was formed with the guidance staff of each school from which all necessary text materials were provided for participants transferring into the (drop out prevention) program at HOPE. Upon the participants departure from the program, all text materials were returned to their provider.

In addition to utilizing resources that were available through agencies and organizations, volunteers were recruited to serve as staff aides. This provided an opportunity for community residents to have programatic involvement.

Findings and Analysis

During the 1986-87 program year, fifty-two (52) potential program participants were identified and personally contacted for possible participation.

A total of forty (40) participants were enrolled in the program during the nine (9) month period of the district school program year.

As stated in the program objectives, all (40) program participants received Vocational Counseling in a one on one as well as group setting. Participants were required to enroll in a vocational program at the local high school or junior college. Non traditional vocational programs were introduced and outlined to students based on information from the Occupational Outlook Handbook. Additionally, participants were referred for individual conferences with vocational program instructors especially in non-traditional areas.

All program participants were referred for services at Community agencies as needed: One (1) participant was referred for and received professional counseling. One (1) participant was referred for and received Legal Counseling. One (1) participant was referred for dental care. Nineteen (19) participants were referred and received Service from the Women, Infant, Childrens Nutrition Program (WIC). Transportation was provided for forty (40) participants for medical care at no cost to the program. Subsidized Child Care was arranged and provided for eight (8) program participants (10 infants) at no cost to the program. Childcare transportation was arranged and provided for five (5) program participants seven (7 infants) for three (3) months of the school year at a cost of seventy-four dollars twenty-nine cents (\$74.29) per child per month. The total cost of Child Care transportation was five hundred - twenty dollars (\$520.00). Additional Child Care transportation was provided for program participants who participated in Vocational Education programs beyond the school year and required summer school program activities.

The special needs of program participants were considered on an individual basis. Referrals for services were made according to special need, when the need could not be met by this program. Vocational Education counseling and assistance was provided to each participant. Participants that were homemakers and single parents were given special considerations based on their need to complete their education and enter the labor market. Vocational program information and referrals were disseminated to all participants who could benefit from Vocational Education.

No purchases for equipment were made which directly benefitted any organization representing the interest of the purchasing entity, it's employees or any affiliate such as an organization. Federal funds were used to supplement, and to the extent practicable

increase the amount of State and Local funds that would in the absence of Federal Funds be made available for the uses specified and in no case supplant such state and local funds. The local application was made available for review or comment by interested parties, including the appropriate administrative entity under the Job Training Partnership Act.

Conclusion

The program served the targeted population as specified in the grant proposal. Most importantly, the program afforded many of the participants an opportunity to continue their education rather than join the drop-out population. Participants that had joined the drop-out population found the program setting an easy entry for continuing their education. The aim of the program was to help where needed in educational matters; rather than condemn because of past mistakes. By maintaining a non-judgmental attitude participants were free to relay their problems and concerns about themselves and their surroundings. In many instances the participants self-concept and self-esteem was rebuilt. Many expressed their appreciation for the program.

Follow-up has been a continuing part of the program. Not only for the participants but for their infants as well. Statistics were maintained and compared on infants birth weights, a remarkable difference was seen in the birth weights of infants born at the beginning of the school term and first semester as compared with infants born near and at the end of the first semester and school term.

Observation of parenting education application was noticed during homebound instruction with the confined parent. It was noted that the older parent was more of a primary care giver for the infant than the younger parent. Seemingly the younger parent lacked the nurturing capability so necessary for infant stimulation. While the extremely young parent is presently in the minority of the targeted population there are many concerns regarding their educational as well as parenting future, for example, the sixth or seventh grader who is a parent will need five to six more years of education before leaving high school. Without some type of special attention or services the young parent with many years of schooling left to complete could become disheartened regarding the completion of her education. There are further concerns relative to Vocational Education and successfully entering the labor market based on the age factor.

It is felt that the program began to accomplish the goal of guiding and directing participants through and educational maze and into Vocational Training. While entry into non-traditional Vocational Programs has not been accepted, continued efforts will focus on making non-traditional Occupations more attractive through an educational program that will be coordinated between the project, local high school and the Vocational Center at the local Junior College

It is believed that had this project not been available, four of the participants that transferred into G.E.D./Vocational Training would not have continued their education. The majority of the participants who will continue their education would have joined the drop-out population.

The Project afforded participants an opportunity for returning or continuing their education in a program that addressed their special needs. Not only were they able to maintain themselves on grade level, they were referred for social and support services when needed for themselves and their children.

Appendix

Statistics provided by The District Family Planning Council located in Tallahassee, Florida.

** Duplicated count.

* Unduplicated count.